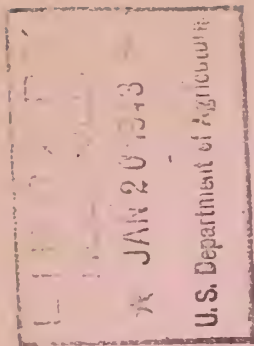


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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, December 16, 1942

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Subject: "Christmas Trees and Greens in Wartime." Information from forestry experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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When Teddy Roosevelt was President there were two years when he wouldn't permit a Christmas tree in the White House. He was such an ardent conservationist that he thought it wasteful to cut trees in the forests, bring them indoors for awhile and then throw them away.

One year his sons, Archie and Quentin, smuggled a Christmas tree into Archie's room where they trimmed it. Later, when Gifford Pinchot, then U. S. Chief Forester, told the President that properly supervised cutting of Christmas greens need not menace the future of forests, T. R. changed his mind and permitted Christmas trees in the White House, which were thereafter set up in Archie's room.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture's foresters say that when you cut Christmas trees, if you make a point of thinning over-crowded stands in the woods, you are really doing the woods a good turn. The trees that are left will have a better chance to develop into high quality sawlogs.

Generally speaking, more farm families will probably have a Christmas tree in their living room this year than will city dwellers. Many farmers raise trees as a part-time job, and they will naturally be cutting Christmas trees from their farm woodlands.

No doubt city families will gladly do without Christmas trees if necessary this year, realizing that labor and transportation facilities is needed for winning the war instead of for cutting and hauling Christmas trees.

Foresters estimate that American farmers and others sold about 10 million dollars worth of native evergreens and berried plants for making wreaths and other Christmas decorations last year. The eastern seaboard produced more than one and one-half million yards of single and double laurel rope, and Montana, Washington, and Oregon produced about half the estimated 10 million Christmas trees that were sold. The bulk of the decorative plants - holly, laurel, ground pine and mistletoe - comes from the Middle Atlantic and Southern States.

Eureka, Montana, calls itself the Christmas tree capital of the world. An enormous number of trees is shipped from this northwest Montana point. Operations for the season begin the middle of October in Montana. On the National Forests in Montana and elsewhere, Christmas trees are cut under permit so as to thin over-crowded stands of young trees and promote forest growth. Operators attach a red tag to each tree to show that it was cut in line with a scientific forest management program.

Homemakers who listen to the radio know that in Washington, D. C., the lighting of the community Christmas tree at 5 o'clock on Christmas Eve is traditional. For many years the ceremony took place in Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House. Two years ago it was held at the Ellipse, and last year it took place on the White House grounds. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke over a radio network from the south portico of the White House, and the tree, twinkling with colored lights, was very beautiful.

Of course, due precautions were taken for the safety of our President, but the fact that throngs of people - without regard to race, color, or creed - could stroll through the White House grounds and have a better view of the community Christmas tree than even the Presidential party on the portico

only goes to emphasize the opportunities we enjoy in a free country like ours.

If you're providing your own tree from your woods this year, you may want to dig it up with its roots and then place it in a tub or bucket of moist soil or peat moss so the tree will hold its needles longer. If you are using a small tree, you can dig it with a ball of earth around the roots. When its period of service as a Christmas tree is over, if it is in good condition, you can keep it in a cool place, carefully watered, and later plant it in the yard.

If you cut your tree, set the tree in a container of water so it will remain fresh for a long time. Housewives know how messy Christmas tree needles are when they clutter up the floor. It's best to cut the base of the tree with a sharp knife just before you put it in water, shaving off the surface so the pores will not be clogged. The tremendous pull of the tiny cells will cause the water to rise in the trunk and the needles will stay on for a week or more longer than if you did not supply water.

Living trees for the birds always interest children especially. They like to tie packets of sunflower seed suet or dried fruit on the branches as the tree is a treat for many winter birds.

By the way, why not use your tree this year instead of throwing it away when you are through with it? If you don't dig your own tree so you can plant it again, you can at least cut the trunk in lengths suitable for the fireplace or stove and then tie the sticks in a bundle to dry. They are excellent for firewood. Some people use Christmas tree branches to protect their gardens from snow and wind.

If you don't have facilities for burning wood, you could set out your tree as a shelter and feeding station for the birds.

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